

Wagner and the Ottomans

Emre Aracı



Photo of 19th-century Constantinople

'I arrived with Minna in Constantinople and was so overwhelmed by the beauty of the place that I cried out that nobody could have any idea of such a thing without having seen it', was how Richard Wagner described to Cosima a visit he had made to the Ottoman capital, which was then duly recorded by her in a diary entry on 30 November



Osman Nuri Pasha, hero of the Plevna siege. Photo by the Abdullah Frères, c.1895

1870.¹ Wagner's dog Rus had also accompanied his master on this trip, but the whole visit turned out to be rather an adventurous expedition, for the composer had lost his wife Minna and searched for her in vain through a maze of streets in the city, during which time Rus suffered an injury to his leg. With the heavy beast under his arm, Wagner finally managed to arrive panting at an inn and inquired about a carriage and a boarding house. Later he was driven around in a carriage by a Turkish coachman and saw the Bosphorus and the Golden Horn. The sight of the city kept sending him into raptures. Yet later in the evening, at Tribschen, he and Cosima were laughing about the particulars of this unusual Wagnerian episode, for it was all but a dream he had had the night before, a vivid dream about a place which he had, in actual fact, 'never set eyes on in real life!'² So ended Wagner's brief fantasy trip to Constantinople and the Ottoman lands.

Wagner's interest in Constantinople was undoubtedly due to its Greco-Roman and Christian rather than Ottoman heritage. As Cosima was reading the history of the Crusades, she and Richard talked about the ninety-year Latin empire in the city, and when she asked him whether he would consider acquiring Geoffrey de Villehardouin's *Histoire* for his library, he took up the idea and talked about the great significance of the story, observing that it was there that the marriage between Faust and Helen took place.³ He was clearly moved, but that was the limit of Wagner's interest in Constantinople, and further, he often expressed his open desire to see the Turks cleared out of the city during the Balkan crisis in the 1870s and the ensuing Turco-Russian War. 'Conversation in the evening; R. develops his favorite idea of giving Constantinople to the Russians; he hopes this is Bismarck's intention', Cosima wrote in her diary on 4 August 1874. And on 3 October 1875 she further noted: 'R. reads us the complaint of the Herzegovinians to the embassies and talks heatedly about the scandal of this Turkish business. He wishes the Russians were in possession of Constantinople.' He had also one day hoped 'to see both Pope and Sultan outside Europe'.⁴

¹ *Cosima Wagner's Diaries 1869–1883*, tr. and ed. Geoffrey Skelton, 2 vols. (London, 1978–80) [CT], 30 Nov. 1870.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, 18 Nov. 1873.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 26 Apr. 1876.



Henry Ketten, the conductor and musical director of the Naum Theatre, and the composer of *Pays lointains*

There were, however, exceptions to be made; when Osman Nuri Pasha (1832–1900), for instance, was victorious against the Russians at Plevna, Richard was unexpectedly ‘much pleased’, for the famous Ottoman general was ‘the same man who some time ago sent him a pamphlet attacking the Jews’.⁵ And on that occasion when Cosima teasingly reminded him of his preference for the Russians, Richard’s answer was plain and simple: ‘One mustn’t allow oneself to be beaten – it is silly’.⁶ Turkish words also occasionally and unexpectedly slipped into the composer’s vocabulary: ‘Hain’, meaning ‘traitor’, was one such word and Richard used it to describe a ‘horrible’ theatre company – ‘the plays as well as the actors’ – he went to see in connection with plans for his sixtieth birthday.⁷ He had discovered this word in Hector Berlioz’s *Soirées d’orchestre*; ‘this was

what the Sultan cried when he wanted someone to be conveyed to the Bosphorus. This made us laugh a lot’, wryly noted Cosima.⁸

Even though Wagner did not personally visit Constantinople and none of his operas were ever performed there during his lifetime, and he wished the Turks out of the city, his music and reputation, as in other parts of the world, had reached the Ottoman court and capital, where he had ardent followers and supporters, even including the Sultan himself. In fact, only a few months before his strange dream, at a concert given in Constantinople, at the city’s Imperial Theatre Naum on the evening of 7 April 1870, the Ottoman public heard for the first time an original symphonic poem composed ‘in homage to Richard Wagner’.⁹ Entitled *Pays lointains*, after Lohengrin’s Montsalvat, the symphonic work was the composition of the 21-year-old Hungarian pianist Henry Ketten (1848–83), who had been employed for the past two seasons as the conductor and musical director of the theatre. Ketten had entered the European musical scene as

⁵ Ibid., 4 Aug. 1877.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., 14 Apr. 1873.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ *Levant Herald*, 5 Apr. 1870; see also Emre Aracı, ‘Wagner’in İstanbul rüyası’ [Wagner’s Istanbul dream], *Andante*, Apr. 2013, 32–5.

a child prodigy and was no stranger to Wagner's wide circle of friends and acquaintances, so much so that Hans von Bülow wrote of him in a letter to Franz Liszt in March 1855: 'This lad, scarcely seven years of age, completely stupefied me with his outstanding musical gifts.'¹⁰

Soon Ketten appeared in Weimar before Liszt, who, having seen the boy's exceptional talent, promised his father that he would try to obtain financial support from the King of Prussia for the prodigy and further advised him to take his son to Bülow for lessons in the meantime. Eventually Ketten was admitted to the Paris Conservatoire, aged 8, and subsequently embarked on a virtuoso career that took him far beyond Europe, to California, where he appeared with the opera singer Carlotta Patti, and to Sydney. He played before Queen Victoria at Osborne House in 1859 and within ten years was a well-established conductor in Constantinople, where ill health unfortunately precipitated his departure for Italy within a couple of years.

The news of the performance of Ketten's Wagnerian composition, *Pays lointains*, in Constantinople probably never reached Tribschen, and in any case its odd programming, placed among a potpourri of unrelated works of contrasting styles and genres, would have undoubtedly amused, if not irked, its dedicatee. Ketten's 'poésie symphonique à Richard Wagner' (as it was advertised in the programme and in the newspapers) was presented in the second half of the concert, which opened with a scene from Act III of Rossini's *Otello*. Then came the much anticipated *Pays lointains*, which was followed by another original composition, also by Ketten, a ceremonial March 'in honour of H.H. Mustapha Fazil Pacha', the brother of Khedive Ismail of Egypt. The evening ended with one of Johann Nepomuk Hummel's piano concertos with Ketten as soloist. Only in Constantinople's Naum Theatre, owned by the brothers Michael and Joseph Naum, originally from Aleppo, could such an eclectic and eccentric mix of repertoire be brought together, but, overall, the concert appears to have been received positively. 'If it is true that Mr. Ketten wants to desert the shores of the Bosphorus and tear himself away from the charm of the streets of Pera, he will not be dissatisfied with the farewells that the public made him in the beautiful concert of which he was the hero and the beneficiary. Warm applause, prolonged reminders showed our young pianist that the number of his friends exceeded that of his enemies', observed the local French newspaper *La Turquie*.¹¹

Pays lointains, on the other hand, was not received so favourably, on the basis of its purely imitative style. The critic of *La Turquie*, having declared that he himself was, like the young and aspiring composer, 'one of the most ardent admirers of the author of *Lohengrin*', knew full well that 'this great master always played dangerous tricks on those who liked to follow him', further noting: 'R. Wagner is in music what Victor Hugo is in literature [...] his disciples, unable to borrow his genius, fall back on his system and exaggerate it.'¹² The review ended with an epithet from Alfred de Musset: 'My glass is small, but I drink in my glass; Mr. Ketten will sooner or later stop drinking in the Schumann and Wagner cup, he will have his own glass and will be able to put in it, I am sure, an excellent liquor.'¹³ Sadly, Ketten's life was cut short due to his persistent ill

¹⁰ Adrian Williams, ed., *Franz Liszt: Selected Letters* (Oxford, 1998), 973.

¹¹ *La Turquie*, 12 Apr. 1870. Author's own translations.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*



Giuseppe Donizetti, known as Donizetti Pasha (1788–1856)

health. He died in Paris in 1883, aged 35, having just returned from Saint Petersburg, where he had recently performed at the invitation of Anton Rubinstein. There is no mention of *Pays lointains* in any other source apart from the Constantinople press, and its score appears to have been lost.

A Wagnerian conductor in Constantinople was indeed a rarity, for Italian opera had mainly dominated the repertoire in the city since the early 1830s, when operatic productions began to take hold, following the pro-European reforms of Sultan Mahmud II (ruled 1807–39) and the appointment of Gaetano Donizetti's eldest brother Giuseppe, whom history would remember as Donizetti Pasha, as *Istruttore Generale delle Musiche Imperiali Ottomane*. And his arrival in the East seems to have caused much stir in the European press of the time: 'in Constantinople the ancient Turkish music died in agony', reported *Le Ménestrel*

in Paris,¹⁴ while *The Musical World* in London told its readership how 'Italian music has become the rage among Mussulmans, and there is now a brilliant Italian opera at Constantinople'.¹⁵ Apparently one Signora Edelina Fritsche, a young and handsome Milanese, was giving lessons in singing to young Turkish ladies of fashion and making her rounds of professional visits in a magnificent litter, richly fitted up with crimson velvet and gold, carried by four black slaves, and preceded and followed by eight others. True or false, reports of this nature clearly added to the mystique of the place.

The centre for this kind of activity in Constantinople in those years was Pera, the European quarter of the city, an uphill extension of the ancient Genoese settlement of Galata, dating back to Byzantine times, where various denominations of Christian subjects of the Sultan lived, across the Golden Horn, facing the old Imperial city. Most of the European embassies and their palatial winter residences were also located here, as well as Constantinople's principal Italian opera house, the Naum Theatre, which also hosted magic shows, matinee and evening concerts, balls, plays, ballets and variety

¹⁴ *Le Ménestrel*, 18 Dec. 1836, 1.

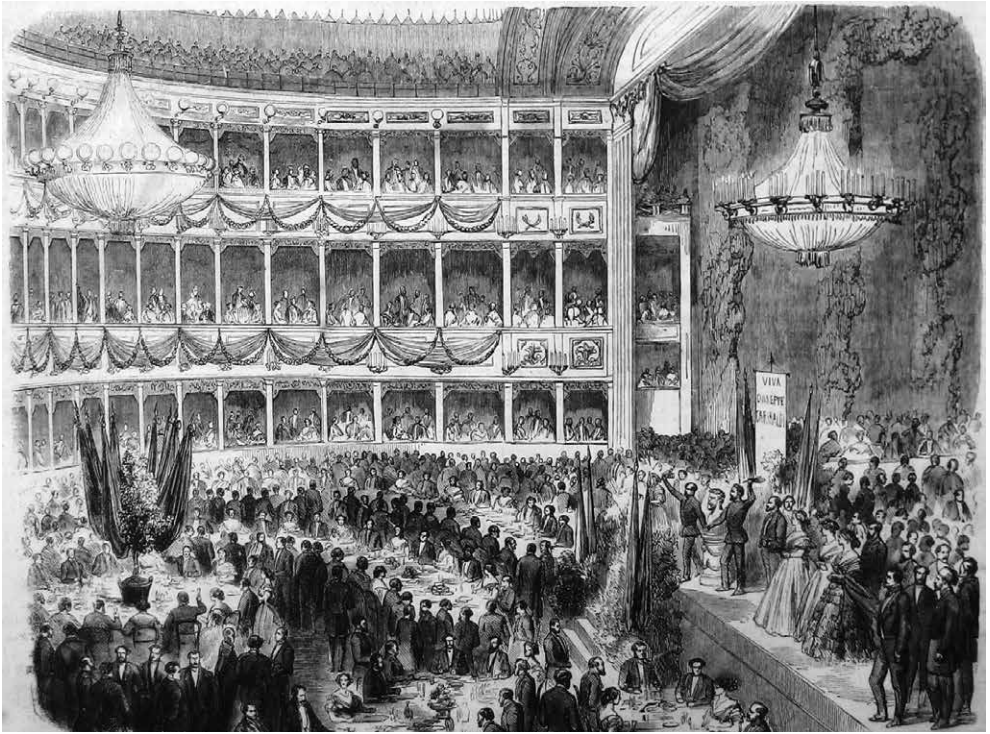
¹⁵ *The Musical World*, 19 Sep. 1839, 331.

performances, until its destruction during the great fire of Pera in 1870. The theatre was not far from Donizetti's house, also in Pera, on Rue Asmali-Mesjid. Long vanished now, the house was visited by Franz Liszt during his celebrated concert trip to Constantinople in the summer of 1847, which created much excitement among the city's musical aficionados, the highlight being the two recitals he gave before Sultan Abdülmecid (ruled 1839–61) and his court at the old Palace of Tcheraghan on the banks of the Bosphorus. Reflecting the local musical tastes, Liszt's chosen repertoire for these recitals included predominantly his own arrangements and fantasias from various Italian operas such as *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Norma*, *I puritani* and *William Tell*, as well as the *Grande Paraphrase* he composed during his stay, on Giuseppe Donizetti's Imperial March for Sultan Abdülmecid. In return the Hungarian virtuoso was awarded the Ottoman Order of Medjidie.

The young Sultan had also received ceremonial marches composed in his honour from Gaetano Donizetti and Rossini, and supported performances of Italian opera not only at his court, which boasted a sumptuous private theatre, comparable to that of Versailles, decorated by Charles Séchan (1803–74) of the Paris Opera, but also at the Naum Theatre, where he had an imperial box. In 1846 *Ernani* became the first Verdi opera to be staged in Constantinople, and when the newly built Naum Theatre was inaugurated two years later, following a devastating fire, it opened with *Macbeth* under the baton of Angelo Mariani (1821–73). 1848 proved to be an important year for Pera's cultural life; revolutions in Europe had displaced a lot of artists in that year and the Naum Theatre had successfully negotiated the services of Mariani as its new musical director. Mariani was an ardent promoter and friend of Verdi in those years, but as is well known, following their rift, he would make operatic history by becoming the first conductor to introduce Wagner south of the Alps, when *Lohengrin* was given at Bologna under his direction on 1 November 1871. The successful premiere was praised by Hans von Bülow, who attended several performances, and Wagner duly sent Mariani his portrait, with the inscription 'Evviva Mariani!!!!'.

With an exclusive licence from the Sultan, the Naum Theatre continued to promote Italian opera in the city, also occasionally including works from the French grand operatic repertoire in its latter years, such as Meyerbeer's *Le prophète* and *L'Africaine*, the latter even being performed during a state gala attended by Sultan Abdülaziz (ruled 1861–76) and the Prince of Wales, the future King Edward VII, in 1869. In the same year the Naum Theatre also hosted Emperor Franz Joseph of Austria, who saw part of a production of Donizetti's *La favorita*, which starred Rosa Czillag of the Vienna Opera, who, incidentally, had sung Ortrud when *Lohengrin* was premiered in Vienna in 1858. But there were no Wagner operas to be seen in Constantinople, which became a contentious issue, fuelled partly by the Swiss journalist Emile Julliard (1837–1907), who, as an ardent Wagnerian, started a campaign in favour of the German composer in the columns of the local *La Turquie* newspaper, whose editorship he assumed in the late 1860s.

Julliard had come to Constantinople in 1868 to become the professor of French literature at the Imperial School of Galatasaray, which was founded by the Sultan in the same year as an elite institution, structured with an entirely European curriculum. Julliard's passion for Wagner would eventually culminate in the publication of his *Le Vaisseau-Fantôme* in 1894, a book with a brief introduction on the composer's life

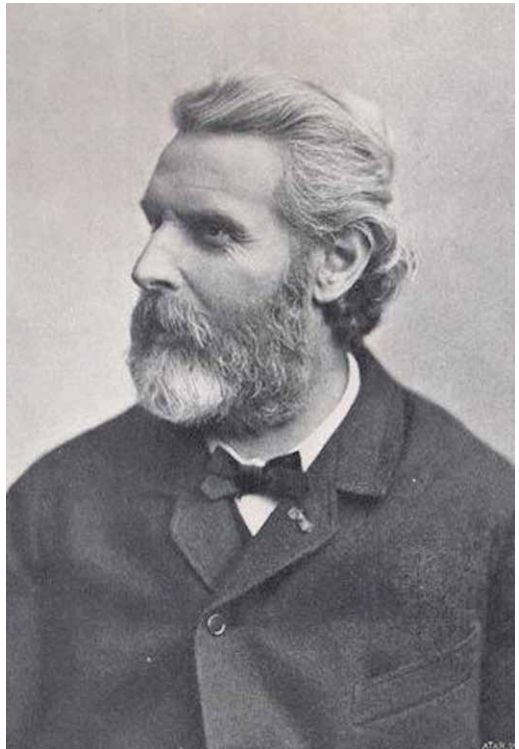


Above

Interior of the Naum Theatre, during a reception in honour of Giuseppe Garibaldi. From *L'Illustration*, 19 April 1862

Right

Emile Julliard: journalist, professor of French literature and passionate Wagnerian



and music, as well as an analysis of *Der fliegende Holländer*; hence the reference to the ghost ship in its title. Julliard also expressed his enthusiasm for all things Wagnerian in his *Voyages incohérents*, published in 1903, which brought together colourful vignettes from his various travels from his life in Constantinople to his sojourns in the lands of Wagner. 'If the level of music is still so low in this country, it is much less the fault of the public than that of the musicians', Julliard claimed in 1869, and openly criticised the Pera public's partiality for Italian composers and particularly Verdi, adding: 'It is certainly not with the anvils of *Trovatore*, nor with the sticks and the tambourines of *Traviata* that we will make the musical education of our population; it is not through the brutalities of Verdi and the dullness of Ricci that taste will be formed.'¹⁶ Later, Otto Dethier, a German conductor resident in Constantinople, wrote in a letter dated 23 May 1885 to the composer Max Bruch: 'The earth is somewhat virgin here.' He continued: 'we have taken on the role of pioneers, who step by step must bring a better culture to this wilderness of Italian taste. We do not often lack battles and crises.'¹⁷



Wagner's patron Sultan Abdülaziz

In the midst of all these arguments a most extraordinary development took place, however, when according to reports Sultan Abdülaziz purchased ten *Patronatscheine* to the value of 300 thalers each in 1872, in support of Wagner's Bayreuth Festival Theatre construction funds.¹⁸ In a letter to Princess Carolyne, Liszt praised the Sultan's generosity for '3,000 thalers!', nevertheless adding with some regret: 'But, so far, the German Empress, Their Royal Highnesses of Weimar, Queen Olga of Württemberg, and many of their august cousins, male and female, are refraining from so doing, not without some ill will towards the project itself.'¹⁹ Wagner, however, was not that much pleased, it seems, by the Sultan's generosity, as Cosima noted in her

¹⁶ *La Turquie*, 5 May 1869.

¹⁷ Christopher Fifield, *Max Bruch: His Life and Works* (Woodbridge, 2005), 215.

¹⁸ Three of the certificates survive at the Richard Wagner Archives in Bayreuth: see Inv. No: 230, 231 and 232, 'Seine Majestaet der Sultan zu Konstantinopel', signed by Wagner, dated 23 Sep. 1872.

¹⁹ Letter dated 19 Nov. 1872, in Williams, ed., *Franz Liszt* (note 10), 756.

diary: 'a letter from Marie Schleintz, reporting that the Sultan is taking 10 certificates of patronage, a piece of news which gives R. little pleasure, since it wounds the pride of our *German* enterprise'.²⁰ And there was now the possibility of the Ottoman flag, with its crescent and star, fluttering outside the Festspielhaus: 'after lunch we visit the theater; the question of the flags is already being raised, because the poles which are to be set up on the roof have to be painted. Just German flags, or those of all the patrons, Turkey, Russia, etc.?' confided Cosima in her diary on 5 September 1873.

There were also others from the Sultan's vast empire who came to the rescue of Wagner. His vassal, the Khedive Ismail of Egypt, for instance, also supported the construction of the Festspielhaus by donating 500 pounds sterling. The Khedive had even considered Wagner, along with Gounod, among possible composers of *Aida*, before the commission was finally given to Verdi, whose opera was premiered at the Khedivial Opera House in Cairo in 1871. Prince Caradja Pasha (1835–94), a Phanariot Ottoman army officer and diplomat, as well as a talented amateur pianist and composer, was also among Wagner's Ottoman supporters, prompting Cosima to remark in her diary: 'Letter from a Turk, Prince Caradja, who asks for an autograph and receives along with it a certificate of patronage.'²¹ Prince Caradja had also served as the director of the Imperial School of Galatasaray in Constantinople, where Julliard was teaching.

How the Sultan's support came about in the first place is not entirely clear, but it was most likely secured through Marie Schleintz, who was instrumental in the foundation of the Bayreuther Patronatsverein in 1870; it was she who informed Wagner of this unexpected donation. Besides, Wagner was most likely referring to her in his account of the 1876 festival, writing: 'the most substantial donations had before been those obtained by my one and tireless benefactress from the Sultan and the Khedive of Egypt'.²² Although Sultan Abdülaziz played the piano and was himself a composer of short salon pieces, with titles like *Invitation à la Valse* and *La Gondole Barcarolle*, published by Francesco Lucca in Milan (who also held the Italian rights to some of Wagner's works), it is highly unlikely that His Majesty's generosity towards Wagner was triggered by any personal attachment to his operas or by his progressive ideas about the future of modern music. Charitable donations were made on the advice of ministers and it was not unusual for the Sultan to make such gifts to foreign projects and causes either, as in the case of his donation to the Crystal Palace in London, after a great fire destroyed part of the structure in 1867.

Wagner similarly had no interest in the Sultan nor showed concern when Abdülaziz was forced to stand down after a coup in May 1876 and died under mysterious circumstances a few weeks later. 'Sultan Abdul-Aziz deposed and strangled', wrote Cosima rather dispassionately in her diary.²³ Reports even circulated about Wagner telling people jokingly that the Sultan's deposition and end came about because of his involvement with the building of the Bayreuth Festival Theatre and the production of the first *Ring* cycle. 'It is doubtful whether the Khedive will be present under existing

²⁰ CT (note 1), 19 Sep. 1872.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 23 Oct. 1871.

²² 'A Retrospect of the Stage-Festivals of 1876', in *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, tr. and ed. William Ashton Ellis, 8 vols. (London, 1892–9; facsimile repr. 1993–5), vi.101–2.

²³ CT (note 1), 30 May 1876.



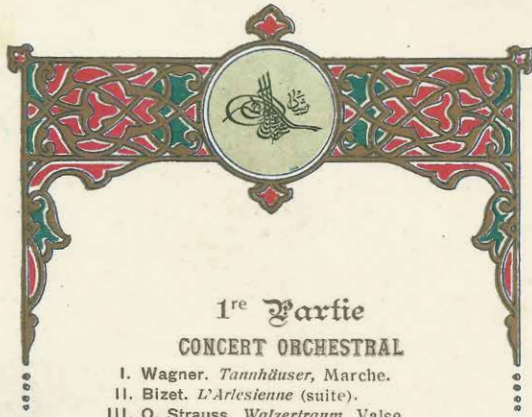
Paul Ernst Lange with his military band in Constantinople

circumstances, although he is the possessor of eleven patrons' tickets', wrote the *The Musical Standard*, adding: 'the late Sultan Abdul Aziz was the possessor of ten tickets, or one less than the Khedive. It is rumoured in Bayreuth that the late Sultan's patronat-tickets have been seized by the Turkish Minister of War and sold, and the proceeds placed in the treasury. Wagner himself has expressed the opinion that the ominous possession of the tickets in part brought about the Sultan's dethronement, the Ministers and the Softas having become exasperated at the Monarch's extravagance in purchasing tickets for the "music of the future".'²⁴

Nevertheless, there remained those still interested in the 'music of the future' in Constantinople, and in particular one name stood out among the rest. He was a fellow German by the name of Paul Ernst Lange (1857–1919), originally from Kartzow, near Potsdam. Lange came to Constantinople in 1880 following his appointment as organist at the Imperial German Embassy Chapel and as professor of singing at the Deutsche Schule in Pera, which had been established in 1868. He had received his musical education at the Berlin Akademisches Institut für Kirchenmusik and also briefly served as the organist at the city's Marienkirche. Deciding to settle in Constantinople permanently, Lange soon set about organising and conducting orchestral concerts in Pera, where works by Austro-German composers were given preference. One of these concerts was even attended by Tchaikovsky, who happened to be passing through Constantinople during a sea voyage from Batumi to Marseille on his way to Paris in 1886. 'A youth was the conductor, of the Leipzig type. After the first part of the program (Overture to *Don Juan*, First Movement of the Pastoral Symphony. Song for trombone and dances by Dvorak) I left', the composer later observed in his journal.²⁵ Advertised as the 'third grand concert' of the season and held at the lively Jardin du Petits-Champs in Pera on the evening of Sunday 16 May 1886, the programme in the second half also featured

²⁴ 'The Bayreuth Festival', *The Musical Standard*, 12 Aug. 1876, 102.

²⁵ Wladimir Lakond, *The diaries of Tchaikovsky* (New York, 1945), 72.

1^{re} Partie

CONCERT ORCHESTRAL

- I. Wagner. *Tannhäuser*, Marche.
- II. Bizet. *L'Arlésienne* (suite).
- III. O. Strauss. *Walzertraum*, Valse.
- IV. S. B. Schlesinger. *Marche Nuptiale*.
- V. Mascagni. *Cavalleria Rusticana*, Fantaisie.
- VI. Weber. *Invitation à la Valse*.
- VII. Lacome. *La Feria*, Suite Espagnole.
- VIII. Wagner. *Rienzi*, Ouverture.

2^{me} Partie

MUSIQUE DE CHAMBRE

- I. Liszt. *Ballade* N° 2. Piano.
- II. a) Wieniawski. *Souvenir de Moscou*, Violon.
- b) Sarasate. — *Danse Espagnole*, Violon.
- III. Rubinstein. — *Trio* op. 15.
- a) Andante. b) Finale. Pour Piano, Violon et Violoncelle.
- IV. Wagner. *Duo d'amour Tristan et Isolde*. Piano.
- V. a) Rabaud. *Romance sans paroles*. Violoncelle.
- b) Schumann. *Rêverie*. Violoncelle.
- VI. M. Bergsan. *Scène et Air*. Clarinette.
- VII. Poldini. *Marche mignonne*. Piano.
- b) Liszt. *Rhapsodië Hongroise* N° 11. Piano.



— برنجی قسم —

اورکسترو طرفندن ویریلجك قونسر

- ۱ — مارش تاننوزدر (واغنر)
- ۲ — آرلهسیه ن (بیژت)
- ۳ — والزه رتروم (او. شتراووس)
- ۴ — مارش نوپسیال (س. ب. شیله زینگر)
- ۵ — قاولله ریه روستیقانا (ماسقانی)
- ۶ — تونیاسیون آلاوالس (وهر)
- ۷ — لافه ریا سوویت (لاقوم)
- ۸ — دی یه نزی قوورتور (واغنر)

— ایکنجی قسم —

پیانو طاقنك قونسری

- ۱ — پالات (لیست)
- ۲ — «آ» روه نیر دزموسقو (دییه نافیکی) کان ایله
«ب» دانس امپاتیول (سارازات)
- ۳ — تریو (روبیشتاین) کان وییولونسل و پیانو ایله
- ۴ — دوئو دامور (واغنر) پیانو ایله
- ۵ — «آ» رومانس سان یارول (رابو) وییولونسل ایله
«ب» رهوری (شومان)
- ۶ — سن (یرغان) قلاتریت ایله
- ۷ — مارش مینیون (پولنچی) پیانو ایله

Programme of the concert given by Sultan Reşad's orchestra at a state dinner at the Dolmabahçe Palace on 21 March 1910

somewhat an unusual concoction of a pastiche, described as a 'Grande Fantaisie on popular melodies', in the styles of the great masters, including 'Bach, Mozart, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Beethoven, Chopin, Strauss, Verdi, Weber and Wagner', perhaps partly explaining Tchaikovsky's early departure.

Lange, however, proved to be a serious and determined conductor in Constantinople, promoting and premiering much German music, including a selection of Wagner's overtures and orchestral works. In 1895, when the newly built Pera Palace Hotel opened its doors to the guests of the legendary Orient Express and the city's fashionable patrons, Lange took the initiative in organising Sunday afternoon concerts in the hotel's sumptuous ballroom. One such performance, on 15 December 1895, included



Sultan Reşad's orchestra, billed as the 'Kaiserlich Osmanischen Palast-Kapelle', at the Odeon Concert Hall, Munich with its Turkish conductor Zeki Bey, January 1918

the *Siegfried Idyll*, which was preceded by the Allegro from Beethoven's Fifth Symphony and followed by Weber's *Der Freischütz* Overture. Teutonia, Constantinople's German social club, active since 1847, also provided a perfect setting for such concerts. For the winter season of 1890–1 an impressive series of concerts was advertised, which included the Overture to *Rienzi*, the Prelude to Act I of *Lohengrin*, Siegfried's Funeral March and the Prelude to *Parsifal*.²⁶ In the same season, Otto Dethier gave a vocal and choral concert with the local Deutscher Chorgesangverein at Teutonia, which included Wolfram's Cavatina from *Tannhäuser*, accompanied by the Spanish harpist Clotilde Cerdá (1861–1926) – popularly known as Esmeralda Cervantes – whom Wagner had actually heard in Munich and praised in a letter to Ludwig II.

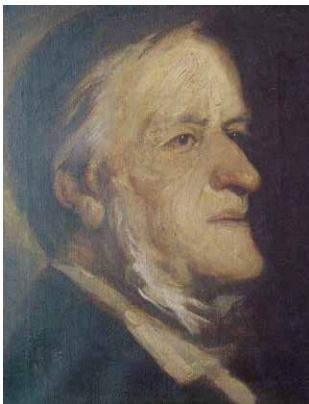
Apart from promoting German music at public concerts in Constantinople, Lange was also instrumental in introducing this repertoire to the Turkish military bands, helped by the political situation in Europe, with a growing alliance between the Ottoman and German Empires towards the end of the 19th century, and also by the fact that in 1906 he was appointed bandmaster to the naval band of Sultan Abdülhamid (ruled 1876–1909), attached to the Imperial Yacht *Ertuğrul*.²⁷ At the same time he also

²⁶ *La Turquie*, 1 Dec. 1890.

²⁷ His son Hans Lange (1884–1960), educated at the German High School in Istanbul, also pursued a career in the footsteps of his father to become the assistant of Arturo Toscanini at the New York Philharmonic in the 1930s and subsequently the conductor of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, whose performances included a concert with Rachmaninoff as soloist, playing his *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* in 1943.

received the Ottoman courtesy title of 'Bey' and composed several Turkish patriotic marches. Under his influence, military band and chamber music arrangements of Wagner's works soon began to appear in the repertoire of the Sultan's bands and music ensembles. For instance, when King Ferdinand and Queen Eleonore of Bulgaria came on an official visit to Constantinople in 1910 as guests of Sultan Reşad (ruled 1909–18) and were hosted at a state dinner at Dolmabahçe Palace on the evening of 21 March, the Sultan's orchestra gave a concert. The first half opened with the March from *Tannhäuser* and closed with the Overture to *Rienzi*; the second half was dedicated to chamber music and featured a piano arrangement of the love duet (*Liebesnacht*) from *Tristan und Isolde*, as printed on the ornate bilingual – French and Ottoman – concert programme, bearing the imperial cypher of Sultan Reşad.

Wagner's music also heavily featured in the programme when the Sultan's symphony orchestra, advertised as the 'Kaiserlich Osmanischen Palast-Kapelle', toured Eastern Europe and Germany during the Great War, when the two countries were allies, with concerts in Sofia, Berlin, Dresden, Munich, Budapest and Vienna between December 1917 and January 1918, under the baton of its Turkish conductor Zeki Bey [Üngör] (1880–1958). At the Odeon Concert Hall in Munich, under the gaze of Wagner's bust, the Ottoman musicians, resplendent in their crimson fezzes, performed the Prelude to *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* and the March from *Tannhäuser*, as well as Beethoven's 'Eroica' Symphony. King Ludwig III of Bavaria, who was in the audience that evening, presented Zeki Bey with a German medal at the end of the concert.²⁸ While in Munich, the Ottoman musicians also had the opportunity to attend a production of *Der fliegende Holländer* given at the city's opera house on the evening of 12 January 1918, which was probably the first time they saw a Wagner opera in full.



Portrait of Wagner by Caliph
Abdülmecid Efendi, after
Hermann Torggler

After the abolition of the Sultanate in 1922, the Imperial Ottoman Symphony Orchestra came under the patronage of the last Caliph of the Ottoman Empire, Abdülmecid Efendi (ruled 1922–4), who played the piano, composed short musical numbers including an *Elegy* for violin and piano, and was active as an amateur painter. He combined his love of art and music by drawing and painting portraits of his favourite composers and musicians. Two of his surviving works in this genre are portraits of Wagner (after Hermann Torggler) and Liszt.²⁹ Even Wagner would not have believed, had he seen it in one of his Tribschen dreams, that the last Caliph of the Ottoman Empire would one day be painting portraits of himself and his father-in-law.



²⁸ *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten*, 13 Jan. 1918.

²⁹ The Wagner portrait was in the collection of the late Taha Toros, who published a colour photograph of it in his article 'Soylu fırça darbeleri', *Antik Dekor*, no. 75 (Feb. 2003).